



NIGHT OWL reporter

Watched Watchers

You enter a room in which mysterious "beeps" hit your ears like the challenge of a pack of aggressive frogs and flashing blue lights snap at your legs like sniper fire.

As you try to acclimate yourself, you gradually become aware that your actions are being projected onto a TV set. If you should make some comment, you may be dismayed to discover later that your voice was being transmitted to another room two flights up.

If you ever have had paranoid fantasies about being the victim of secret surveillance, you can act them out here, at the three-floor Pulsa exhibit in Automation House, 49 E. 68th St., but if you're not 100% uptight, you should have some fun, too.

On the second floor, in a brick-walled room, you find yourself flanked by two giant screens. On both of them you see yourself captured by TV and projected life size but one of the projectors has a six-second lag. Thus, for instance, you scratch your nose. Eerily, six seconds later, your screen image scratches *its* nose as if parodying you.

A sweet odor seeps out as you open the door of the third-floor room. Here is another screen, more projectors and more flashing lights, but also a grove of potted plants, including hyacinths. The



NEWS photo by Evelyn Straus

Thais Lathem and Pulsa duo among their exhibit's greenery.

plants have no connection with electronics. They're there because they're nice to see and smell and because Pulsa hates to see available space unused.

Pulsa is a group of seven people, artists-technicians in electronics, who prefer to be known by their collective name. They are around, constantly working behind the scenes, and will be glad to interrupt their operations to talk with you.

Their exhibit is the windup of a six-month series of exhibits presented at Automation House by Intermedia Institute. Automation House, in a five-story brownstown, is an association of organizations whose integrated aim is to try to keep man from becoming subordinate to technology. Intermedia Institute concentrates on the theatrical aspects. As an example of its other exhibits, last December an electronic composer attached electrodes to visitors' heads and let them listen to tones created by their brain waves.

The directive genius behind Intermedia is Mrs. Thais Lathem, a bright-eyed little woman who looks as if she'd more likely be encountered at a Schrafft's luncheon table than at an electronic concert. Don't be misled. Mrs. Lathem is an expert in the field. Two years ago, she put together a series of electronic events called Electric Ear at the Electric Circus.

Technology in art—computers, television, lasers—is a "galloping" form, she contends. "Young artists can't help being involved with technology," she said. "It's all around them. They're way ahead of companies like IBM in understanding. These artists may be the ones to save us from technology."

A member of Pulsa said they want to make the public knowledgeable and comfortable enough to participate in technological research so that new devices will have the uses the public wants and not prearranged, rigid, industry-determined uses.

The Pulsa exhibit can be experienced 6 to 11 p.m. Thursday and Friday, noon to 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Admission is \$1, students 50 cents. Mrs. Lathem has made videotapes of all previous presentations, but not this one. Pulsa felt it would be an invasion of visitors' privacy, a rather puzzling attitude considering all those cameras and speakers trained on you. Well, the devices are all in plain sight if you look around and they do have a stated purpose: to demonstrate the possibilities of long-range visual-aural communication.

By the way, if you encounter a loudly amplified thrumming sound in the men's room, it's just part of the presentation. For the ladies' room I cannot speak.

—ERNEST LEOGRANDE